

Robert's Rules of Order

Highlights and Tips for Commissioners

Prepared by Julia Gustafson, Office Manager, February 2011



The Ten Basic Rules (From Professional Development Center Resources)

1. The rights of the organization supersede the rights of the individual.
2. All members are equal with equal rights.
3. A quorum must be present to do business.
4. A simple majority rules unless otherwise stipulated in the bylaws. (Commission bylaws state majority rule.)
5. Silence means consent.
6. Two-thirds vote rule- necessary when limiting or taking away the rights of members.
7. One question at a time- one speaker at a time.
8. Motions must receive full debate- no motion to vote may be made if members wish to continue debate unless 2/3 agree.
9. Once a decision is made, an identical motion may not be brought forward at the same meeting.
10. Personal remarks in a debate are ALWAYS out of order.

Standard Order of Business

(The Executive Director with the Chair and Vice Chair prepares agenda for the Commission prior to meetings. The Commission bylaws state that the Executive Committee shall approve all agendas. The purpose of the agenda is to prepare the Commission and the general public for the meeting. However, the agenda is a suggestion and can be changed. Open Meeting Law states that action items need to be included in the agenda. For the Commission, this usually means anything that the commission will be voting on.)

1. Reading and Approval of the Minutes
 - a. OCS staff sends draft minutes to Commissioners so the minutes do not need to be read aloud. Chair will say, "The minutes from the previous meeting have been distributed. Are there any corrections to the minutes?" Motions to approve the minutes do not need to be seconded.
2. Reports
 - a. Includes updates from Chair, Executive Director and Staff, and Commissioner Workgroups
 - b. Reports can include a motion at the end of the report, example with the Grant Review Workgroup presenting a funding recommendations and a motion to adopt the recommendations.
3. Unfinished Business
 - a. Any business from the previous meeting, this should be included in the agenda.
4. New Business
 - a. Usually included in the agenda, but Commissioners can also introduce new business. The public cannot introduce new business.
5. Public Comment
 - a. Not mandated by Robert's Rules of Order, but by the Montana Constitution (Art 2, Sec. 8 & 9) and Open Meetings Law (MCA 2-3-103).
6. Adjournment
 - a. If there is no more new business, the chair does not need a motion to adjourn.

Robert's Rules of Order

Highlights and Tips for Commissioners

Prepared by Julia Gustafson, Office Manager, February 2011



Tips on Motions and Amendments (See handouts on Motions and 'How to Speak in a Meeting')

Motions bring new business to the Commission and require a majority vote to adapt. Motions should be clearly phrased in the positive and contain a 'what' (the action to be taken) and a 'when' (the timeframe for the action taken).

Motions must be seconded and repeated by the chair before debate begins on a motion. (The Chair can work with the motion maker to make sure the motion is clearly worded before it is restated). Motions must be made before ideas and actions are discussed. Exceptions being with a workgroup report.

Friendly amendments cannot be made to motions. The motion maker cannot accept changes to the motion after the Chair had restated the motion. The motion must be amended and the amendment must pass before the motion is changed. Amendments must specifically state what should be changed. Amendments are voted on before the main motion (original motion) is voted on. If an amendment does not pass, it goes back to the main motion which is still on the table.

Motions can be referred to committee or in the case of the commission, to a workgroup. This requires a majority vote and must specify the workgroup to be referred to and what should be brought back. This might be useful for new business that is brought to the Commission that needs further investigation before the Commission votes.

Proxy

Proxy voting is specified in the Commission Bylaws- not Robert's Rules. Commissioners can delegate their voting authority in writing to another Commission member and that delegation expires at the end of each meeting. Commissioners can delegate a *general proxy* that gives the holder the right to vote as the holder sees fit on all issues and motions made at the meeting. Commissioners can also give a *limited proxy* that stipulates the way that the holder is to vote on specific issues. Proxies must be made in writing and given to the Executive Director and the Chair.

Conference Calls and Interactive Video

It is specified in the Bylaws that meetings "may be held by telephone or video conference as necessary to conduct Commission business." Robert's Rules states if a group's bylaws include provisions for electronic meetings, members should adopt rules that allow for all members to fully participate in the democratic process. We do this during video conference calls by 1) cycling through each site repeatedly for Commissioner comments, 2) asking Commissioners to introduce themselves with each comment, 3) roll call votes by site, and 4) cycling through each site for public comment. During video conferences it is important that Commissioners let the Chair know if he or she missed information *prior* to a vote being taken on a motion.

Robert's Rules of Order

Highlights and Tips for Commissioners

Prepared by Julia Gustafson, Office Manager, February 2011



Helpful Terms to Know

Appeal to the Chair- used when a member disagrees with the chair, needs a second and debate

Commit- means to 'refer to committee'

Count Vote- when the vote is to be counted because of uncertainty with a voice vote

Incidental Motions- motions that are about the procedures of the meeting, example *point of order*

Lay on the Table- used to set aside a motion temporarily without deciding a time to revisit it, best used to take up a more urgent business item. 'Lay on the Table' should not be used to kill a motion.

Main Motion- formal proposal that contains an action, the first motion in the order

Point of Information- used to ask a question to the chair or another member about the motion at hand

Point of Order- used to call attention to a rule being broken

Postpone Indefinitely- used to get rid of a motion without having a vote about the motion

Postpone to a Certain Time- used to vote on a motion at a different time without getting rid of the motion

Previous Questions- closes debated and prevents the making of secondary motions, must be seconded and adopted with a 2/3 vote

Privileged Motions- not related to the main motion being discussed but is immediately important, example *Raise a Question of Privilege*

Quorum- (in Bylaws) one-half of the voting members of the Commission

Raise a Questions of Privilege- used for calling attending to room conditions- example if you cannot hear what was said or see what was written

Secondary Motions- same as subsidiary motions, changes something in the main motion

Subsidiary Motions- changes or gets rid of the main motion, example *amend*

References:

1. Roberts Rules of Order, Newly Revised, in Brief, by Henry M. Robert III, *et al.* Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2004.
2. Roberts Rules of Order, Simplified and Applied, 2nd Ed., by Robert McConnell Production. Indianapolis, Wiley Publishing, Inc., 2001.
3. "The Basics of Roberts Rules of Order", Handout by Jane Rhodes of the Montana Professional Development Center, 2010.